

ETC Education Telecommunications Council

NOTES
NOVEMBER 15, 1999

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The November 15, 1999, meeting of the Education Telecommunications Council was held at Iowa Public Television. The following members were present: Bob Barak, Regents; Al Bode, ISEA; Dean Borg, IASB; Paul Bowers, IAICU; John Hartung, IAICU; Gary Hayden, AEA Boards; Connie Maxson, SAI; David Montgomery, DE/CIANS; Kathryn O'Shaughnessy, ISEA; Pam Pfitzenmaier, IPTV; Mary Travillian, AEA Boards; and Rich Gross, DE/ex-officio. Gene Gardner, IACCT; Kay Runge, DE/Libraries; Mick Starcevich, SAI; Gail Sullivan, DE; and Emmett Vaughan, Regents, were absent.

The following guests also attended this meeting: Kathy Guilgot, RTC 1; Kathy Williams, ICN; Dennie Eitmann, RTC 13; Rich Varn and Darrell Fremont, Information Technology Services; Ken Colwell, St. Ambrose University; Joan Ketels, UNI; John Haack, RTC 10; Tony Spencer, North Winneshiek High School; Karen Lombard and Marlene McComas, RTC 5; Bruce McKee, RTC 2; Kitty Conover, RTC 3; Roger Rezabek, RTC 7; Chuck Chrisman, RTC 16; Stacy Rockhold and Julie Burrell, RTC 14; Winston Black, RTC 11; John O'Connell, DE; Julie Thomas, RTC 6; and Kathy Borlin and Debbie Fiscus, IPTV.

REMINDER: Please mark your calendars! Per the agreement of ETC members, the December ETC meeting will be December 17 instead of December 6 as previously announced.

II. UPDATES AND ISSUES

II.A. Transition Team Update

Rich Varn reported to the members that ITS has presented the recommendations of the Transition Team and the related report of the consultants to the legislative oversight committee and to the Governor. Rich informed the members that the Transition Team has employed the State Public Policy Group to develop a communications plan concerning the reorganization and to help ITS implement some parts of that plan. The Transition Team will be working during the month of November and into December on budget proposals with a plan to try and incorporate the entities involved in the reorganization of Information Technology. Discussion followed.

II.B. Update on ICN Issues

II.B.1. ATM

Kathy Williams informed members that all of Region 14 has had ATM technology installed in its sites and that Region 13 will be the next area of the state to have the technology installed. If work proceeds as planned for Region 13, a "cut-over" will occur over Christmas break of this year. Discussion on this item was kept brief due to the agenda item about the ETC tests of ATM to DS-3 (see item IIc. below).

II.B.2. VOSS Scheduling Software

Kathy reported that there have not been any significant changes to the VOSS scheduling software since the October ETC meeting. The "completion" list for scheduling software issues has been narrowed down to a couple of issues, primarily related to in-advance scheduling. The in-advance scheduling process is in the developmental stage. In order to assure that the scheduling software meets the needs of the educational community for the "in advance process," a meeting of ICN staff, Todd staff and 5 educational schedulers was held early in November. It is expected that development of the in-advance components and subsequent testing period by educational schedulers will be completed and ready for use in the summer 2000 in-advance scheduling process beginning in January. The educational schedulers involved in the initial testing are: Becky Bedford, Doug Kutzli, Michelle Davenport, Wayne Prophet, and Ken Colwell. Regular ETC updates on the progress with the in-advance scheduling software components will be part of December and January ETC meetings.

Pam asked about the concerns that end users have expressed about the scheduling software (that it does not have many of the features that the end users found in the CISCO software). Kathy stated that these end user features would be considered "enhancements" and would not be addressed until the in-advance components were completed.

II.B.3. VOSS Switching Issues

Kathy reported that the ICN is continuing to experience problems with the switching portion of the VOSS software. Kathy reported that over the weekend, software changes were made by Todd personnel and were downloaded to the ICN. Supposedly these changes were to fix some of the recurring problems that have been reported on a weekly basis. Instead the software changes caused other problems to occur. These problems affected sessions that started first thing on Monday morning (Nov 15). Kathy assured the ETC members that in the future, Todd software will not be downloaded and run on the "live" system until Kathy is positive the software will operate correctly. Further she assured that the testing of software will not occur during the operational part of the day-only during the "after hours" period when it will not affect live sessions.

Two of the regional coordinators reported that the Monday, November 15, early morning classes in their region had been disrupted by the switching software changeover. The coordinators and ETC members present re-emphasized the consistent stance of the ETC that a). the top priority of the ICN video network is the effective operation of educational sessions (software changes should not negatively affect ICN sessions when classes/educational sessions are being conducted); b). live testing of software not conducted at a time when classes might be impacted; c). regional coordinators be informed when there are problems that affect ICN video sessions so that instructors and students can be notified.

II.C. ATM Test Session

Rich Gross, Al Bode, Bruce McKee, Pam Pfitzenmaier, Stacy Rockhold, and Julie Burrell

provided an overview of the outcome of the ATM testing that occurred on Sunday, November 7 by members of the ETC and RTCs. A summary of the results of this test was sent via email to ETC members. A second test of the ATM/MPEG II technology sponsored by the ETC is in the planning stages at this time.

Concerns were expressed about the "latency" of the video from the remote ATM/MPEG II sites, particularly when student presentations were involved. Julie Burrell and Stacy Rockhold commented that some of the instructors in ATM sites in Region 14 had found the "latency" to be so disruptive when students were presenting from remote sites that the monitors in the remote classrooms had to be shut off. One ETC member questioned whether this latency or delay would be so distracting that not only would teachers and students find it annoying but it might interfere with the learning process. It was agreed that before wide-scale deployment of ATM/MPEG II could be implemented, the latency/delay issue would need to be solved. Discussion followed, especially concerning the upcoming second phase of tests involving ATM sites in Region 14.

II.D. Use of Technology for College of Medicine, U of IA

Dr. Michael Kienzle of the University of Iowa informed members about the restructuring of the preparation of physicians at the University of Iowa College of Medicine. Over the past several years, instructors have implemented "case-based learning" and have placed medical students into learning "communities" with first, second, third and fourth year students in each "community." An important feature of this restructured learning environment is more early clinical contact with the use of distance learning technologies to connect the students back to the campus resources. The resulting curriculum and instructional changes have apparently had a positive impact on the medical students since they have shown a 100% pass rate on national exams over the last 2-3 years, a pass rate better than previous students. Michael discussed the impact of case-based learning on the use of the materials/resources in the Hardin Library. Because research into clinical cases requires in-depth investigation by the medical students, use of the materials in the library has increased 400%. Michael suggested that the ETC members might wish to invite staff from the Hardin Library to an ETC meeting at a future date to discuss how libraries and media centers respond to the needs of distant learners and to the demands of case-based and clinical experiences.

II.E. Update on ETC Core Group Meeting on November 8

Pam P., Kathy Williams, Rich Gross, and Mary Travillian provided an overview of the ETC Core Group meeting that was held on November 8. Some recommendations that came from this meeting were to 1). Write a monthly tech update and distribute via email to "need to know" RTC coordinators, educational schedulers, ETC members and regional tech support staff. This tech update would highlight issues and updates in "lay language" so everyone would know about planned software upgrades, progress on ATM issues, technical issues to "watch for," etc.; 2). R & D aspect of ICN and ITS. This process would be a sharing and more coordinated effort among the educational institutions and state agencies testing new technologies. 3). As part of ETC efforts to work on a basic ICN Level of Service agreement, it was noted that it is important for educators to put together a database of key individuals

within each institution and region who should be contacted in the event of technical problems (e.g. who to contact at the local/regional level to notify when are Internet problems). It was suggested that Mike Bacino be invited to the December "core group" meeting to go over the "who needs to know" process since he has responsibility for working on the Service Level agreement. Discussion followed.

II.F. Feedback from RTCs on "On Demand" and ITTC "Cancellation" Policies

Pam reminded members that the ETC would be considering taking action concerning the ETC "on demand" policy and the ITTC video session "cancellation" policy. Paul Bowers stated that the Operations subcommittee of the ETC will meet prior to the Dec 17 ETC meeting and will consider feedback from the RTCs regarding the On-Demand policy and the ITTC Cancellation policy. Pam asked that the RTCs send the feedback to her or to Paul. A recommendation for possible ETC action will be presented by the Operations subcommittee at the ETC at the December meeting.

II.G. Update on New and Emerging Technologies

Rich Gross informed members of new agenda item for ETC meeting: New and emerging technologies. For example, desktop video platform and the new MP3 down-loadable audio music format might be demonstrated and/or discussed for educational applications. Rich requested that if you have anything that you would like to have on upcoming ETC agendas concerning new technologies to please submit them to him at rgross@iptv.org.

Rich Varn and Darrell Fremont of ITS described the concept of a 21st century learning infrastructure initiative. In preparation for possible funding of this initiative, they have produced a Request for Information (RFI) to be sent to potential vendors and users in January. The plan is to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) in March or April, with responses due back by the end of May, evaluation of those responses during the month of June, and if funding is available on July 1, begin implementation in the new fiscal year.

Stacy Rockhold and Julie Burrell informed members of the E-College Grant that Southwestern Community College received. Roger Rezabek informed members that the RTC Coordinators/Chairs meeting that was originally scheduled for December 6 following the ETC meeting has been moved to follow the re-scheduled ETC meeting on December 17.

III. ADJOURNMENT

The November 15, 1999, meeting of the Education Telecommunications Council was adjourned at 11:00 a.m. The next meeting of the ETC will be December 17, 1999, 9:00 a.m., at Iowa Public Television.

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